

**Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Model:
Project and Documentary Film**

EPA Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance

Geographic location or area of activity: Spartanburg, South Carolina

Description of activity: The southside of Spartanburg, SC, is home to the low-income and minority communities of Arkwright and Forest Park, which are situated amidst two Superfund sites, an operating chemical manufacturing plant and six Brownfields sites. The collective effect of the residential areas' close proximity to these sites, as well as the apparent lack of environmental controls during and after facility closures, reduced the value of area real estate and fostered a systemic deterioration of the community.

In 1998, resident Harold Mitchell contacted EPA about the adverse health conditions in his community and the possible link to contaminated local sites. Although EPA did initial testing and found no immediate threat to human health or the environment, the Agency decided to conduct further investigation. Meanwhile, Harold Mitchell formed a community organization called ReGenesis and secured a \$20K EJ Small Grant to work with community stakeholders to identify local issues. ReGenesis was also selected as one of the first 15 federal Environmental Justice Interagency Working Group (IWG) demonstration projects, opening doors to funding and attention at the federal and state level. First, the community identified three areas of concern: (1) the former IMC fertilizer plant, (2) the Arkwright landfill, and (3) the Rhodia chemical manufacturing facility. The community embarked on a visioning and goal-setting process, and formed the ReGenesis Environmental Justice Partnership to revitalize the 500-acre project area.

Simultaneously, through the demonstration projects, EPA and the IWG developed the Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving (CPS) Model as a framework for addressing local environmental and public health concerns through collaborative partnerships. The ReGenesis Environmental Justice Partnership used elements of the CPS Model to leverage the initial grant from EPA to generate more than \$166 million in funding (as of 2006), including over \$1 million from EPA Region 4. The partnership marshaled the collaboration of more than 200 agencies as well as local residents, industry and a university to revitalize two Superfund sites and six Brownfields sites into new housing developments, an emergency access road, recreation areas, green space and job training that are vital to the community's economic growth and well-being.

ReGenesis proved to be such an excellent example of what can be accomplished with EPA's funding, training and partnerships that the Office of Environmental Justice produced a documentary film about it as a training tool to put thousands of other communities on the path of collaborative-problem solving. The DVD can educate other, similarly situated communities about the value of the collaborative problem-solving process, and give them a glimpse of what such communities can achieve.

Interagency partners (main): Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD); Department of Health and Human Services (HHS); Department of Transportation (DOT); Department of Energy (DOE); SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (SC DHEC); and SC Department of Transportation (SC DOT)



ReGenesis executive director Harold Mitchell with his mother and grandmother on the front porch of their house, a home located right at the center of the community's environmental, health, economic and social problems.

Local partners (main): ReGenesis, Inc. (non-profit community-based organization); City and County of Spartanburg, SC; Spartanburg Housing Authority; Rhodia, Inc.; Vigindustries/The Mosaic Company; and University of SC, Upstate

Activity URL: <http://www.epa.gov/compliance/resources/publications/ej/ejcps-dvd.html>